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AUTHOR Conklin, Karen A.
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ABSTRACT

Two nontraditional markets for increased college/university enrollments are discussed, potential students age 50 and over and high school students enrolled for dual credit in advance placement classes. Two telephone surveys were conducted, one to county residents aged 50 and over, regarding their educational needs and interests, and the other to county adults regarding their perceptions and opinion of Johnson County Community College (JCCC) in Kansas. Results are discussed in terms of adult interests, motivations and preferences and marketing strategies for this group. Dual-credit enrollment programs for high school students are also discussed, and the College Now program at JCCC is briefly described, and its evaluation by former students is summarized. Contains 14 references. (KM)

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New Markets: Possibilities for Increasing Nontraditional Student Enrollments

Karen A. Conklin

Market and Survey Research Analyst

Office of Institutional Research

Johnson County Community College

12345 College at Quivira

Overland Park, KS 66210-1299

(913) 469-8500

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Running Head: NEW MARKETS

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This paper was presented at the Twenty-Ninth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at the Omni Inner Harbor Hotel and the Lord Baltimore Hotel, Baltimore, Maryland, April 30 - May 3, 1989. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

Teresa Karolewski
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Abstract

This paper describes the methodology and results of research designed to investigate two nontraditional markets for increased college/university enrollments--potential students age 50 and over and high school students enrolled for dual credit in advance placement classes. Since adults age 50 and over are the fastest growing segment of the population, their educational concerns will increasingly be given prominence over the coming decades and provide a large new market possibility for colleges and universities concerned with declining enrollments. High school/college dual-credit partnerships increase current enrollments and encourage participants to enroll at the participating college after graduation. These two potential markets are discussed in relation to research designed to provide both marketing and evaluation data and their implications for increased enrollment.

New Markets: Possibilities for Increasing Nontraditional Student Enrollments

Traditional college/university enrollments have come primarily from students in the 18-25 age range. There are, however, increasingly strong demographic signs that this may be a declining market. Thus, if institutions of higher education hope to maintain or increase enrollments, they must begin to look at potential markets outside of this 18-25 age range.

Johnson County Community College (JCCC), a suburban Midwestern community college, has moved in two directions simultaneously in this regard. Specifically, the College has investigated and begun curricular initiatives for older persons and for students still in high school.

Since older adults are the fastest growing segment of the population, this group may be a large new market possibility for colleges and universities concerned with declining enrollments. Thus, in spring 1988 a study specifically designed to ascertain the eduational interests and needs of older county residents was conducted by the Office of Institutional Research at JCCC.

To reach a second potential untapped market, JCCC initiated a program called "College Now" in fall of 1984 to offer high school students an opportunity to receive dual credit for selected advance placement high school courses which met the curriculum standards of the College. During each of the succeeding years, new high school graduates who had participated in College Now were surveyed to address such issues as the transfer of credit to other colleges and universities, quality of instruction, perceptions of the College, satisfaction with the program, and other questions related to College Now.

The 50 and Older Population

A later-life demographic revolution is occurring in America today. Never before in history have so many men and women reached retirement age in such good physical and mental health. Over 70 million people, nearly 30 percent of the population, are age 50 or older. If current trends prevail, this will be the only group experiencing significant increases in the next century.

Many individuals in this group--mostly the nation's growing population of retirees--are beginning to seek out campuses for old-fashioned intellectual fulfillment (Tifft, 1988). Older adults appear to be substantially under-represented in the classroom, however.

It has been predicted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census that succeeding generations of older persons will have more years of formal schooling and, since formal school is a significant predictor of adult education participation, future generations of older persons should be more likely to engage in educational activities (AARP, 1987).

A number of studies have been conducted to provide the data essential to effective curriculum development and marketing strategies for the older adult population (AARP, 1987; Bronte, 1987; Meyers, 1987; JCCC, 1988). If higher education institutions can take advantage of the demographic shift with innovative learning programs, some of the seats emptied by the "baby boomers" might be filled by these older adults.

History of Programs for Older Adults

Educational programs specifically designed to meet the needs of older adults were virtually nonexistent until 1962 when the New School for Social

Research in New York City established the Institute for Retired Professionals. Their first program was developed by the retirees themselves, with the blessing and benign help of the institution (Meyers, 1987).

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Institute of Lifetime Learning was founded in 1963 and pioneered model educational programs throughout the country until the mid-1970s. It has functioned as a national advocate for older learners since that time. A total of 123 educational programs designed for older persons by colleges, universities and other organizations were identified by the AARP Institute of Lifetime Learning by the close of 1987 (AARP, 1987).

Many of these programs for older adults follow the objective of the Association of Learning in Retirement Organizations, Western Region (ALIROW), which is to encourage and assist the establishment of strong, membership-powered, membership-governed learning centers for the retired or semi-retired community at the university/college level.

Peer-teaching and self-study are encouraged, with the cooperative sponsorship of a college or university. The institution's role is initially perceived to be curriculum organization, then as a source for auxiliary faculty lectures and, finally, to meet the physical needs of classroom and office space (Meyers, 1987).

One successful example is Harvard's Institute for Learning in Retirement, a program of courses specially created for and taught by retirees on the Cambridge campus. Another, Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, has opened a 133-unit senior citizen condominium on its campus, complete with 60 nursing beds. A third, Elderhostel, was founded in 1975 as a summer

residential program for people over 60; by 1985 over 100,000 people were enrolled in Elderhostel programs at more than 800 campuses around the country.

The JCCC Study of Older Adults

The percent of Johnson County residents age 55 and over was considerably greater than for the country as a whole in 1980, and recent studies indicate the Johnson County population is aging at the fastest rate of the seven counties comprising the Greater Kansas City area. In addition, this population group is the fastest growing in the county, both in terms of percent and absolute numbers. Finally, the College enrolls only a fraction of this large and growing market segment.

For these reasons, the College decided to investigate the educational needs and interests of older persons and attempt to identify ways in which the College might most effectively meet those needs. Thus, the Office of Institutional Research at JCCC administered a telephone survey to a stratified random sample of county residents age 50 and over in April of 1988. A total of 207 useable interviews were completed. In addition, pertinent results of a telephone survey administered in April 1987 to a stratified random sample of county adults to ascertain the constituency's perceptions and opinion of JCCC (an "image" study) have also been tabulated for the 283 respondents then 50 years of age and older. Both groups were representative of the entire county population age 50 and older with respect to various demographic variables.

Results and Conclusions

Adults age 50 and older constitute the fastest growing segment of the population. They are reaching retirement age in better physical and mental health than ever before, and thus constitute a prime market for innovative

educational programs designed to meet their special needs. It would appear the older adult population has a distinct interest in learning, but not necessarily in learning what the establishment is currently teaching, or in the location and manner in which it is being taught.

Why Older Adults Enroll. Personal enrichment courses were of interest to more respondents to the JCCC study than any other category of educational offerings. However, over half of the JCCC respondents age 50 to 59 expressed interest in practical skills courses, and nearly half of this age group were also interested in occupational skills courses. See Table 1.

Insert Table 1

About two out of three older learners responding to the 1981 National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) study indicated personal interest was their main reason for participating in educational activities; about one-quarter gave job-related reasons as their major reason for taking a course (AARP, 1987).

This is not too surprising. John Palmer of the Urban Institute cites studies which indicate that people generally reach the peak of their productivity only in their fifties. Many people find they have grown beyond their original career choice by the time they reach their late forties or early fifties. If they are ready for a change, they may take early retirement as an opportunity to shift into a different kind of work. This trend, combined with the recent trend of corporations "early retiring" increasing numbers of people, is producing a substantial number of candidates for additional education (Bronte, 1987).

Why Older Adults Do Not Enroll. The reasons cited by nearly half of all respondents to the JCCC study for not pursuing additional education were lack of time or lack of interest in more education. Cost or poor health accounted for less than 10 percent of responses.

Differences between these findings and results of a study conducted by the National Council on Aging and the Harris Studies in 1974 on reasons older adults do not pursue additional education supports the assumption that older adults are healthier and leading more active lives than ever before. Insufficient time was cited as the reason for not pursuing additional education by only 13 percent of 1974 Harris respondents; 46 percent of 1988 JCCC respondents cited this reason. Conversely, poor health was a primary reason for not enrolling for 22 percent of 1974 Harris respondents and only 6.5 percent of those responding to the 1988 JCCC study.

Topics of Interest to Older Adults. Respondents to the JCCC study were asked how important it was to them personally to learn more about 18 topics pertaining to their individual and educational needs. Relationships between the perceived importance of acquiring more education in selected topics and age or sex were apparent in several cases.

Fewer respondents age 70 and over than those age 50 to 69 indicated it was important to them to learn more about 16 of the 18 topics addressed by this study. It was unclear whether this finding was a function of respondents' perception of being "too old" or reflected a true lack of interest in additional education in these areas. Additionally, a greater percentage of females than males felt it was important to learn more about 15 of the 18 topics.

Topics of interest to older adults tended to fall into two primary categories; 1) those providing a sense of control or coping (such as remaining independent, improving and maintaining physical and mental health, or budgeting, for example) and 2) those providing a continued sense of meaning (broadening world understanding, appreciating the arts, etc.). Results of the 1981 NCES survey were similar (AARP, 1987). Table 2 details the eight topics considered important to learn more about by the greatest percentage of respondents.

Insert Table 2

Preferences for Methods of Delivery. Respondents to the JCCC study indicated the greatest interest in noncredit courses, no homework or tests, short-term or self-paced study, few campus visits, and individual sessions of one to two hours' duration only. Additionally, a preference was indicated for educational offerings provided in convenient, close-to-home locations where adequate close-in parking was available. About one in three respondents expressed interest in educational offerings exclusively for students age 50 and over.

Nearly 60 percent of the JCCC respondents indicated class meeting time would affect their decision to enroll. Weekdays were preferred to weekends; 43 percent preferred evening hours (7 to 10 pm), 28 percent preferred morning hours (8 am to noon), and 24 percent preferred early evening (5 to 7 pm).

How to Reach Older Adults. Results of the JCCC study indicated that the most effective method of conveying information about the College was via

direct mail, although over 70 percent of respondents also indicated they received some information about the College through newspaper advertising.

Plans for Additional Education. Although less than 4 percent of the employed respondents to the JCCC study indicated plans to pursue additional education after retirement, over 16 percent of those already retired indicated they were, in fact, engaged in educational activities. Nearly four times as many were enrolled in noncredit offerings (27.5%) as those who had enrolled in credit offerings (7.2%) within the past year.

Marketing Strategies for Older Adults

The older adult population appears to be seriously under-represented in the classroom nationwide. Innovative programs specifically addressing the needs of older students, marketing efforts designed to alleviate perceptions of being "too old" to learn, and an advertising campaign designed to encourage completion of degrees after retirement when time for such enrichment activities is more readily available, has the potential for increasing enrollments in a manner unsurpassed in the history of postsecondary education.

Several findings from the JCCC study should be borne in mind when planning for the older adult learner. Rather than semester-long courses delivered in the usual format, older adults apparently prefer short-term offerings providing ample opportunity for interaction. Discussion groups on group-selected topics which utilize peer instructors appear to be particularly successful. Additionally, sessions of no more than one or two hours' duration, offered in easily-accessible locations, with few requirements, and at convenient times appear to be preferred.

More older adults were participating in noncredit educational offerings than credit courses. It was unclear whether this was due to an aversion toward requirements in credit courses (i.e., tests and outside assignments), a preference for the types of noncredit educational opportunities available, a difference in class meeting times and locations, or a result of other variables.

About 80 percent of adults age 50 or older, and 70 percent of those 40 to 49 have neither a postsecondary vocational certificate nor a degree. It would appear one of the single greatest barriers to serious consideration of returning to college to work toward a degree may be the opinion that college is primarily for the young and they are "too old."

The general age vicinity of 48 to 50 years was identified in a study conducted by the University of Washington as the threshold of intense interest in planning for the future and retirement (Anschell, 1983). Marketing efforts aimed at this age range may provide the foundation for future educational exploration and participation, particularly in career-related courses.

The High School-College Connection: Dual-Credit Programs

Dual credit enrollment occurs when high school students enroll in college-level classes for simultaneous high school and college credit (Kleinrock, 1986). College Now at JCCC is but one of many variations of the dual-credit enrollment theme currently being implemented in the United States. To date, none of the criteria for dual-credit programs have been challenged in the courts as inappropriate or in violation of individual rights (Greenberg, 1988, p. 71).

The primary objectives of dual-credit programs are to smooth the transition from high school to college, shorten the time needed to earn an undergraduate degree, avoid unnecessary duplication of curricula, and improve the study habits, general academic readiness, and academic options for these college-bound youngsters.

Often, such programs also serve to strengthen relationships among high school teachers and college faculty, provide teachers with new opportunities to keep up with developments in their academic disciplines, encourage collaborative curriculum development projects and research on effective instruction, and help college faculty maintain a keener awareness of the realities of educating today's children.

History of the High School/College Connection

In the 1880's the Massachusetts Teacher's Association passed two resolutions. One declared that the lack of cooperation between high schools and colleges was an "evil," and the second declared that increased cooperation between the schools and higher education would be a positive "good." As a result of these resolutions, the first high school-college meeting convened and established a national panel to bring together educators from both levels. This was the first of a number of meetings between 1893 and 1918 convened by the National Education Association.

The report of The Committee of Ten, made up of college leaders, represented the first national attempt to standardize the high school curriculum and coordinate secondary and postsecondary education (Stoel, 1988, p. 16). It was not until the mid-sixties, however, that innovative approaches

which sought to focus on individual growth and learning needs of students through high school-college connections were initiated.

Funding under a Dual-Credit Enrollment Theme

Where public institutions are concerned, the funding of dual-credit programs has occasionally posed a serious legislative dilemma. In cases where students take classes for simultaneous high school and college credits, both college and high school may claim the student, opening the possibility for double funding claims.

A number of state legislatures have already addressed this issue and arrived at differing solutions. Minnesota, for example, allows students to choose between applying their earned course credits to high school or to college graduation requirements--but not to both. Florida has developed a complicated system that allows monies to follow students, and New York has adopted several models for funding concurrent enrollment; such models simply double-fund the students (Greenberg, 1988, p. 72).

College Now at JCCC

Initiated in the fall of 1984, the College Now program allows high school students who have completed the majority of credits for high school graduation and are enrolled in honors or Advanced Placement (AP) classes to also enroll for college credit through JCCC. Courses that reflect the College's content, objectives, and assignments are taught on the high school campus by high school teachers whose credentials have been approved by the College.

Costs. JCCC charges the standard credit hour tuition rate to all College Now students, but does not collect state reimbursement for these students. Therefore, no double funding results from this program. One-third of all

tuition collected from College Now students is returned to the school district. Several districts utilize these monies to fund innovative projects proposed by the faculty, thus providing additional benefits to both students and teachers. Despite the tuition reimbursement to participating school districts, room sets of textbooks, and other miscellaneous operating expenses, the College Now program has proven to be consistently cost-effective.

Quality Control. Occasional on-site visits to high school classrooms enable the college staff to monitor the program and establish professional relationships with the teachers. Each College Now teacher must submit a course outline at the start of every semester and, in many instances, the final exam utilized by JCCC faculty is also administered in the College Now class. These "common" exams are jointly developed by the high school and college faculty.

Growth. When College Now was initiated, 14 courses were offered at eight participating high schools and enrolled 287 students in 1,444 credit hours. By spring of 1989, the program had grown to include 19 different courses offered at 12 public and private high schools throughout the county with 821 students enrolled in nearly 4,400 credit hours. These totals represent a 186 percent increase in headcount and an increase in credit hours generated of over 200 percent.

Follow-up of Former College Now Students

Each fall, follow-up studies of high school graduates who had participated in College Now have been conducted to address such issues as the transfer of credit to other colleges and universities, quality of instruction, perceptions of JCCC, satisfaction with the program, and other questions

related to involvement in College Now. Response rates have approached 50 percent each year these follow-up studies have been conducted.

Just prior to the Thanksgiving holiday, surveys are mailed to the home addresses of all former College Now students who graduated during the preceding year. A follow-up mailing is sent the middle of December when final exams are concluding. Covering letters signed by the dean of instruction or academic vice president accompany these surveys.

Results and Conclusions

College Now and similar dual-credit offerings nationwide are successful, growing programs which help to bridge the gap between secondary and postsecondary education. These programs seek to create opportunities and real incentives for high school students to work hard academically, to "test the waters" before full-time college study, to explore various career options, and to understand the commitment necessary to be successful in a given field.

Number of Classes Completed. The average number of College Now classes completed by respondents has increased every year. Over 25 percent of 1988 respondents had completed five or more classes, giving them the option of transferring a semester or more of college credits after graduation.

Reasons for College Selection. Nearly all respondents were full-time college students. Reasons former College Now students selected one college over another tended to be consistent year after year with location, availability of a preferred major, and cost the three most influential factors. Nearly half of the 1988 respondents also indicated the prestige of

the college and its reputation were factors which influenced their choice. See Table 3.

Insert Table 3

Transfer of College Now Credits. College Now credits transferred course-for-course for 87.5 percent of 1988 respondents, and as electives for another 4.3 percent. About one in four were attending out-of-state schools. Nearly 40 universities outside of Kansas (where articulation agreements are in place) were identified by respondents as accepting College Now credits--only five universities were identified as not accepting any such transfer credits. Previous follow-up studies of former College Now students elicited similar results.

Satisfaction with College Now. Former College Now students have been consistently satisfied with all aspects of the program, with the exception of their perception of their status as JCCC students. Despite positive steps to alleviate this problem, the majority continue to indicate they do not feel like "real" college students because of receiving their College Now instruction at the high school rather than on campus. See Table 4.

Insert Table 4

Nearly three out of four respondents felt they were better prepared for college as a result of their College Now experience. Only one in six 1988 respondents indicated that a course in which they were enrolled at their college was more difficult than the College Now class in the same discipline

completed in high school. Nearly all respondents indicated they would recommend College Now to their friends.

Further study of dual-credit programs is suggested, particularly cooperative efforts among colleges currently offering such programs and longitudinal studies of former dual-credit students, to ascertain the long-term effects of the head start on postsecondary education these programs provide.

Implications for New Markets

Very large potential new markets for college and university students exist in both the growing population age 50 and over and in the current high school student population. The problem of decreasing enrollments may be substantially reduced or eliminated by colleges and universities interested in taking advantage of the opportunity to provide innovative programs designed to meet the unique needs of these populations.

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Table 1

Percent of Older Adults Expressing Interest in Selected Categories of Educational Offerings

Item	All (n=207)	50 - 59 (n=69)	60 - 69 (n=64)	70 & over (n=62)
Personal enrichment courses*	44.9%	55.1%	45.3%	32.3%
Discussion groups on group-selected topics	37.2	40.6	42.2	29.0
Practical skills courses*	36.2	52.2	39.1	17.7
Occupational skills courses*	23.2	44.9	18.8	4.8
General education courses	13.5	17.4	14.1	9.7

* Significant relationship between level of interest and age of respondent ($p < .05$).

Table 2

Percent of Older Adults Indicating Additional Education in Selected Topics was Important

Topic	All (n=207)	Males (n=100)	Females (n=107)
Remaining independent*	56.5%	46.0%	66.4%
Improving and maintaining physical and mental health*	53.6	46.0	60.7
Broadening world understanding	45.9	41.0	50.5
Appreciating the arts*	42.0	30.0	53.3
Understanding consumer rights and responsibilities*	41.1	33.0	48.6
Dealing with community problems and governmental activities	38.2	38.0	38.3
Planning for retirement	36.2	37.0	35.5
Improving use of leisure time to enhance life experiences	32.9	32.0	33.6

* Significant relationship between perceived importance and sex of respondent ($p < .05$).

Table 3

College Now Students--Reasons for College Selection

Item	1986 (n=78)	1987 (n=98)	1988 (n=234)
Location	81.3%	80.0%	75.3%
Cost	61.3	61.1	59.9
Program (offered preferred major)	46.7	60.0	64.8
Scholarship assistance	34.7	42.1	39.2
Reputation	46.7	36.8	46.3
Prestige	45.3	35.8	47.1
Social life	29.3	30.5	26.4
Athletic program	4.0	7.4	9.3
Other	8.0	12.6	14.5

NOTE: Multiple response item; percentages are not additive.

Table 4

Percent Indicating Satisfaction with College Now

Item	1986 (n=78)	1987 (n=98)	1988 (n=234)
Overall satisfaction	84.6%	86.7%	90.6%
Course content	82.1	78.6	90.6
Quality of instruction	79.5	75.5	86.8
Attitude of high school teachers toward College Now	76.9	74.5	84.2
Attitude of high school counselors toward College Now	58.9	69.4	71.4
Dissemination of College Now information	62.9	68.4	70.9
Involvement with JCCC	44.9	44.9	44.0

NOTE: Percent combines responses of "very satisfied" and "satisfied" on a 5-point Likert scale.